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THE MONIST

THE CHRIST OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN FAITH. IN THE LIGHT OF RELIGIO- HISTORICAL CRITICISM.¹

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE JESUS OF HISTORY AND THE CHRIST OF FAITH.

IT is a great and lasting glory of nineteenth century scientific theology that it has taught the distinction between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history, which are identified by ecclesiastical dogmatics. By careful and painstaking critical investigations it has shown how the dogma of the god-man came into existence, gradually, as the result of a process of combination in which religious ideas of various origin were blended with the recollections of the primitive Christian congregation respecting the life of their master. It has attempted further, by eliminating later elements and by going back to the oldest sources, to get as near as possible to the historical reality regarding the founder of our religion, and to make the understanding and the heart of the modern world more familiar with his figure, stripped of its veil of myths, in its purely human greatness as the worshipful portrait of a lofty religious and moral hero.

The value of this undertaking is incontestable, even though sober common sense cannot shut its eyes to the fact that there are also involved many illusions with reference to the significance of the results thus obtained.

¹Translated from the original manuscript by Prof. W. H. Carruth, University of Kansas.

In glancing at the abundance of literature connected with the life of Jesus the question cannot be avoided, whether these attempts to get at the bottom of the historical reality can ever yield more than hypothetical conjectures, whether they do not, precisely in proportion as they paint the life of the founder more concretely, lose from under their feet the firm ground of what is historically authenticated and soar into the regions of ideal fiction. One can scarcely avoid giving an affirmative answer to these questions when he observes the profound differences in the professedly historical conclusions of the authors of the various lives of Jesus.

Indeed, could anything else be expected when we consider the fact that even the earliest accounts reveal the most unmistakable evidence of the transfusion of the historical elements with the ideal motives of legend, with apologetic argumentation and dogmatic speculation? Jewish prophetic expectations, rabbinical lore, oriental gnosism and Greek philosophy had already mixed their colors upon the palette from which the portrait of Christ was painted in the writings of the New Testament.

All that we can derive as authentic from these writings is the Christ of the faith of the primitive Christian congregations and teachers. To this portrait, which was so varied and complicated from the beginning, the recollections of the first disciples concerning the life and death of their master contributed an important portion, indeed, the center of crystallization of the whole, but yet only one portion alongside many others. But the question, How much of the portrait of Christ in the New Testament is to be credited to genuinely historical recollection and how much to other sources? is a problem which can never be solved with absolute certainty.

CHRISTIANITY BASED ON THE CHRIST OF FAITH, NOT ON THE JESUS
OF HISTORY.

The fact that so many people continue to shut their eyes to the incontestable reality of this situation is doubtless connected with the assumption, which seems to pass almost universally as an axiom in our day, that the knowledge of the nature of Christianity stands or falls with the exact knowledge of the historical person of its founder.

But is not this assumption also an illusion? For surely it is evident that the Christian religion and the Christian church are founded upon the faith in Christ of primitive Christianity, as it is recorded in the New Testament, and in contemporary Christian literature. This and nothing more is the solid historical fact, which cannot be altered, however the answer may run to the inquiry regarding the origin of this faith in Christ. Whether historical recollection concerning Jesus of Nazareth contributed more or less and directly or indirectly to its development, or, indeed, in case, as is highly improbable, it contributed nothing at all, yet for all that, the content of this faith and accordingly the nature of Christianity would remain altogether the same.

Now it follows from these reflections that scientific theology cannot fulfill its mission of investigating the nature of Christianity, if, instead of searching thoroughly and without reserve into the entire content of this New Testament belief in Christ, it selects out only what seems agreeable to present-day thought, in order, by ignoring everything else and by injecting much of its own invention, to construct an ideal of Christ in accordance with modern taste. This method of procedure is widespread to-day and much commended—who is not familiar with the series of novels called lives of Jesus, which was begun by Renan? And who does not praise Harnack's *Wesen des Christentums*?

In fact, a certain practical merit must be conceded to these works, inasmuch as they can reawaken among the many indifferent an interest in religious ideas and an enthusiasm for ethical ideals. Only we should guard against the tremendous error of thinking that the portraits of Christ drawn in these works, differing with the personality of the author, yet in all cases touched up in more or less modern fashion, are the result of scientific historical research, or that they compare with the primitive portrait of Christ, as does truth with error. We should be sufficiently sober and honest to admit that both the modern and the primitive portraits are the creations of the common religious spirit of their times, sprung from the natural necessity of faith to fix and visualize its characteristic principle in a typical form. The difference between the two corresponds

to the difference in the periods—in the earlier case a naive, mythical epic, in the later a sentimental, subjective romanticism.¹ Which of the two is truer is an utterly idle question, as idle, as, for instance, would be the question whether Homer's *Odyssey* or Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Klopstock's *Messias* were truer.

To the antique consciousness the portrait of Christ in modern garb would be unintelligible, and therefore untrue, while for the modern consciousness the naive faith in the antique mythical epic is no longer possible. But to consider the myth an empty illusion and superstition because we, being no longer so naive as the antique mode of thought, cannot regard it as historical reality, would be a gross blunder, pardonable in the eighteenth century, but which the historically disciplined thought of modern science ought to be finally above. Myths especially, and the religious ceremonies connected with them, in which the mythical material is dramatically presented, detached from transient forms and elevated into a perpetual phenomenon, are everywhere the most primitive and most vigorous expression of the characteristic genius of every religion, and have therefore the very greatest value for the historical student of religion. They are absolutely his fundamental source of knowledge.

But to be sure, in order to understand the sense and significance of the primitive Christian myths, one must not examine them in their traditional isolation, but must derive instruction from their kinship or connection with the myths and legends of the general history of religion. In my opinion there still lies a rich field of labor for the theology of the twentieth century in the realm of the comparative history of religion, in the cultivation of which we shall find the solution of many problems which Biblical exegesis and literary criticism have thus far attempted without great success. The realism of the ancient fashion of religious thought and speech, which we moderns think so strange that we are always inclined to dissipate it into symbolism, will become more intelligible and our sense for the psychological motives and the historical backgrounds of the legends will grow keener.

¹Cp. Schiller's distinction between naive and sentimental poetry.

We are, indeed, but at the threshold of this extensive task to-day. And if I venture, despite this fact, to offer a trial specimen of it in the religio-historical illumination of the primitive notion of Christ, I do so, hoping for kind indulgence, and at the same time with the purpose of paying my tribute of gratitude to the learned investigators of Holland, who have rendered the most distinguished service to the science of comparative religion—as one, instead of many, I name our never-to-be-forgotten friend, Tiele.

I.—CHRIST AS THE SON OF GOD.

THREE VIEWS.

That Christ was the son of God was the belief of the Christian Church from the beginning, but, as to how far and in what sense he was the son of God, there was at first much difference of opinion. We can distinguish at least three meanings of the word, each of which has its parallels partly in Jewish and partly in extra-Jewish religions.

1. According to the earliest views, the man Jesus was elevated to the rank of son of God by an act of divine adoption, which was associated in the first place with the resurrection from the dead and the ascent into heaven, and afterward by the voice from heaven at the baptism and the accompanying conference of the miraculous Messianic power of the spirit. According to this view “son of God” did not yet imply a supernatural character in Jesus, but only the endowment with the function and power of the Messiah, the divinely appointed king of the chosen people.

2. Alongside this view, which prevailed in the earliest church, there was found in the congregations of gentile Christians at a very early period the conception taught by the Apostle Paul, namely, that Jesus was the son of God in the sense that a personal spiritual being, who had previously existed in heaven, had become incorporate in him. Paul had conceived of this Christ-spirit not precisely as a god, but as God’s own and first begotten son, and image, and as the prototype of man, as the celestial ideal man (the second man from heaven, 1 Corinthians, xv, 47), who was appointed from the beginning to save mankind from the curse of sin, of the law, and of death, by his appearance in an earthly body.

Now the mediator of salvation must also needs be from the beginning the mediator of creation, wherefore he is called in the Epistle to the Hebrews the "impress of the substance of God, upholding all things by the word of his power (i, 3), and in 1 Colossians "the first-born of all creation, in whom and through whom and for whom all things are created, and in whom all things consist" (i, 15 f.).

Now the Gospel of John condensed this chain of thought into the doctrine that in Jesus the "logos" had become flesh, having been in the beginning with God and himself a god, through whom all things had come to pass, in whom was the life and the light of men (i. 1 f.). According to this conception Christ is the son of God no longer by virtue of adoption and apotheosis, but by virtue of the incarnation of the divine being accomplished in his person, who, as the "logos," that is, the personal word, has been the mediator of all divine revelation from the beginning of the world.

3. A combination of these two conceptions, the incarnation of a god and the apotheosis of a man, is finally met in the tradition¹ which arose among the gentile Christians in the second century and soon became the most popular theory of all, namely, that Christ was the son of God in the sense that he was supernaturally begotten by the Holy Ghost, without a human father, and was born of the Virgin Mary, being therefore on the maternal side, indeed, a human being, but on the paternal side a son of God in the most specific physical sense of the word.

PARALLELS TO CHRISTIAN NOTIONS IN JEWISH RELIGION.

For these various views of the divine sonship of Christ Jesus² we find precise parallels partly in the religious history of Judaism and partly, and more completely, in that of gentile nations.

¹Matt. 1, 18, 25, and Luke 1, 34f. Only in these two passages, the latter of which did not belong, perhaps, to the original text, is this tradition mentioned in the Old Testament; it is therefore one of the latest elements of the New Testament Christ.

²For fuller proofs and exposition of the sketches of the New Testament Christ presented here, and in the lectures that are to follow, I refer once for all to my book, *Das Urchristentum, seine Schriften und Lehren*, 2d edition, 1902.

The adoptive-theocratic divine sonship of the Messiah goes back, as is known, to the early Israelitic notion of the intimate union of the Davidic kingdom with the tribal God Jahveh. The prophetic author of the Books of Samuel has God say of David: "I will establish the throne unto his seed forever. I will be his father and he shall be my son, so that if he commit iniquity I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men; but my mercy shall not depart from him as I took it from thy predecessor, but thy house shall be made sure forever before me" (2 Samuel, vii, 13, ff.).

Having faith in this alliance of Jahveh and the Davidic royal house, the pious king comforts himself (Psalm ii), in the face of the hostile counsels of the rulers against Jahveh and his anointed, with the certainty that God has established his king upon Zion, and has said to him: "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee (that is, appointed king). Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for an inheritance and the ends of the earth for thy possession; with an iron scepter thou mayest destroy them and dash them to pieces like potters' vessels" (Psalm ii, 6 ff.).

In this sense the Jewish people hoped for the anointed one (Messiah) of the day of salvation, who, as the son of David, was also to be the "son" of God, that is, his chosen favorite, protégé and vassal.

But beside this adoptive conception, which still prevails in the Psalms of Solomon, coming from the time of Pompey, there is found in the apocalyptic literature of late Judaism another, according to which the Messiah appears not as an earthly man and son of David, but as a mysterious spiritual being issuing from celestial concealment. In the metaphors of the Book of Enoch, written in the last decades before the Christian Era, the Messiah is described as the "Chosen One," the "Son of Man," who was concealed from God before the world was created, whose glory will endure from eternity to eternity and his power from generation to generation, in whom dwells the spirit of wisdom and might, who will judge the things that be in secret, work vengeance upon kings and rulers, but save the just and holy (Enoch, chapters xlv-li).

Furthermore, in the Apocalypse of Ezra (chapter xiii) the seer beholds something in the likeness of a man rising from the sea, flying on the clouds of heaven, destroying hostile armies with a stream of fire from his mouth, but saving and leading home from captivity the scattered Israelites. And this vision is then interpreted as follows: "The man rising from the depths of the sea is the one whom the Most High has been reserving for long years and through whom he purposes to redeem creation. As no one can learn what is in the depths of the sea, so no one of the dwellers upon earth can see my son and his attendants, save at the hour of his day" (i. e., of his revelation for the last judgment and the salvation of the world).

From this we perceive that the depths of the sea, from which the savior and son of God shall come forth, is only a symbol for his primeval concealment in a mysterious place. And while it is not indeed expressly said that this place is heaven, yet as much might be inferred from the savior's "lying on the clouds of heaven" (xiii, 3) and by the "attendants" who accompany his advent (verse 52), by whom we must understand either the angels or the righteous men of the first dispensation who were transported into heaven, and who, according to xiv, 9, tarry with the son of God until the fulfillment of the times.

Clearly, therefore, both according to the Apocalypse of Ezra and to the metaphors of Enoch, the coming savior is that son of God, the man (son of man), who was to preëxist in heaven unto the time of his revelation. True, it is hard to say how this is to be reconciled with the utterances of xii, 32, that the Christ would come from the seed of David, and that after a rule of four hundred years he, with all other men, would perish. A solution of this conflict will scarcely be found, but its existence may be explained by the fact that the author of this apocalypse remained undecided between the later thought of the Messiah as a preëxistent celestial being and the earlier notion of him as an earthly man and son of David.

PARALLELS IN NON-JEWISH THOUGHT—THE LOGOS DOCTRINE.

The combination of these two views, which existed in late Jewish times side by side, through the assumption of an incarnation

of the celestial son of God and of man in the body of an earthly man and son of David, was not accomplished within the Jewish fold, but was in its nature so plausible that we have no cause for surprise when we see it brought about very early under the Christian dispensation, from the time of Paul on.

The same importance that is held by the son of God and of man in the late Jewish apocalyptic writers is attributed in the Alexandrine-Jewish religious philosophy to that mediatorial being who is called now "wisdom," and now "logos" (reason and word). In the book of the Wisdom of Solomon, by a Hellenistic Jew of Alexandria, from the first century before Christ, "wisdom" is represented (vii, 22 ff.) as an independent spiritual being beside God, the (feminine) mediator of his revelation in creation, maintenance and government of the world, a semi-personal hypostasis, a semi-material fluid, ethereal and divisible, pervading all space, like the Stoic-Heraclitic world-spirit, which is partly reason of the universe, partly primordial matter (primordial fire), but akin also to the Zoroastrian archangel, Vohu mano ("good thought"), who is associated with Ahura as his chief agent.

This Hellenistic hypostasis of the divine wisdom is partly a metaphysico-cosmic principle of the creative process, partly the underlying essence and mediatorial agent of the historical revelation of God in the religion of Israel and in general in pious souls, making them friends and children of God and raising them up to eternal life in association with Him (Wisdom of Solomon, iii, 1 ff., v, 16 ff., vi, 12 ff.). In this hypostasis¹ the Hellenistic-Jewish author has attempted to combine the monistic speculations of Greek philosophy (in Heraclitus and the Stoics) and the positive belief in revelation held by Jewish theism.

He was followed in this attempt by the religious philosopher of Alexandria, Philo.² He conceived of the opposition between the infinitely lofty, unknowable and unnamable God and the sensual world as mediated by "powers," which he calls also "ideas" and

¹Cp. Stave, *Einfluss des Parsismus auf das Judentum*, p. 205 ff.

²For details I refer to my treatment of Philo in *Urchristentum*, 2d ed., ii, 25-54, where all the passages here cited may be found.

"angels," among whom he distinguishes six chief ones, who surround the throne of God as his satellites, like the six Amschaspan of the Zarathustrian religion, and perform the work of the government of the world as his agents. Among these mediatorial "powers" the first place is held by the "logos," who appears to be the essence and source of all the others, and therefore to be the central mediator of all divine activity and revelation. Philo calls him "the eldest, first-born son of God, the eldest angel, the beginning, the word and the name of God, his image and the prototype of man." As the mediator of God's revelation he has a rôle at the very creation of the world, and this partly as the idea of ideas, in accordance with which the universe is formed, partly as the creative power by which everything is called into being.

The logos, therefore, is both the metaphysical ideal principle, like the Platonic "idea," and also, the real principle, like the Stoic logos. But in distinction from these philosophical principles the logos of Philo is at the same time an independent, semi-personal mediatorial being, the earliest creation of God, most closely akin to the Persian-Jewish archangels. In this latter function he is the agent of all the historical revelation of God in Israel, the real presence in all the Old Testament theophanies, for instance, in the stories of the patriarchs, and especially of the giving of the law through Moses, and he comes into a relation with the logos so intimate that it borders closely on incarnation, although this doctrine was not taught.

Furthermore, the heavenly manna in the wilderness, the miraculous flow of water from the rock and the fiery flames of the cloud that accompanied the people of Israel were all forms of the appearance of the logos, whose ultimate substratum in animistic popular metaphysics is thereby clearly betrayed.

Just as the Stoic worldly wisdom was personified in Hermes, the messenger of the gods, and as in the Egyptian Thot¹ the creative

¹Thot was identified with Hermes by the Greeks, and the latter, in the Stoic theology, had been made into an apparition of the divine wisdom. The kinship of this Logos-Hermes with the Logos-Christ was recognized by the early Christian apologists, cp. Justin, *Apol.* 1, 21.

spell of Ammon-Ra received independent existence as divine mediatorial beings, and in Vohu mano the creative wisdom of Ahura, and Marduk's supreme decree in the Babylonian Nabu, so Philo's logos arose from the fact that the personified creative wisdom and the word of revelation of Jahveh are identified with the worldly wisdom of the Stoa. Thus it became a composite of metaphysico-rationalistic principle, religio-positive mediator of revelation, and ideal man. As son, image and messenger of God he is at the same time the high priest, intercessor and advocate (paraclete) of men.

DIVINE SONSHIP IN PAGAN HISTORY.

Among pagan nations belief in the existence of sons of gods was universal, and pertained not only to mythical beings, but also to historical personages of conspicuous importance, especially to rulers and sages. In Egypt, from the earliest times up to the last of the Pharaohs, the king was regarded as an incarnation of divinity,¹ he was called the great and good god, Horus; prayers and offerings were made to him, and it was believed that he either fulfilled these prayers himself or else transmitted them to the celestial gods, his fathers and mothers, with whom he was in constant communication. The Egyptian kings even worshiped themselves, that is to say, the divine being, called Ka, incarnated in themselves.

An illustration in point is an extant prayer addressed to King Cherenptah. It reads: "Thou art, O King, altogether like the image of thy father, the sun, that rises in the heavens. Thy beams penetrate even the caverns. No place lacks thy beneficence. Thy words are law in every land. When thou art resting in thy palace thou hearest the words of all countries. Thou hast millions of ears. Bright is thine eye above all the stars of heaven, seeing everything that is done in secret, O merciful Lord, Creator of the breath of life!"

In Babylonia,² too, the kings from the time of Sargon, the

¹Wiedemann, *Die ägyptische Religion*, S. 92 ff.

²Radau, *Early History of Babyl*, p. 308 ff.

founder of the realm, were regarded as emanations of the godhead. Sargon's son, Naram Sin, called himself "God of Agade, Lord of the Heavenly Disk." Later this system of giving titles disappeared for a time, but was revived again by the kings of the fourth dynasty of Ur, all of whom prefixed to their names the character for God (Dingir), erected temples in their own honor, placed their own statues in various sanctuaries, had offerings brought to their own spirits and appointed the first and the fifteenth day of every month as sacred to themselves.

This belief in the divine origin of kings was so deeply rooted in oriental thought that it was extended even to foreign conquerors and rulers. When Alexander the Great had conquered the Persian and Egyptian empires he had himself announced as the son of the Egyptian god Ammon-Ra, and among his successors the kings of Egypt, and to some extent those of Syria, followed his example.

It was therefore natural that the eastern portion of the Roman empire should precede the western in its cult of the emperor. For in the former there was no hesitation about accepting the living emperor as God, i. e., as an incarnation of divinity, or worshipping him with public ceremonies, while in the Occident there was more reserve in the matter.¹

To be sure, divine honor was paid in Rome to the "spirit" (genius) of the emperor, even during his lifetime, beginning with Augustus, but the majority of the emperors during the early centuries did not venture to assume the title of "God" directly. The elevation to the rank of a god ("divus") was not conferred upon an emperor until after death, and even then not upon all indiscriminately, but only upon those whom the senate considered worthy of this apotheosis (consecratio). In the Occident, therefore, the divinity of the emperor was understood as an apotheosis or the elevation of the deceased to equal rank with the gods, on account of personal merit; in the Orient, on the contrary, it was understood to be the actual incarnation of the godhead in every living emperor as such.

¹Beurlier, *Le culte impériale*, p. 52. Boissier, *La religion romaine*, I, 163. Compare the hymns to Emperor Augustus recently found at Priene.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION IN PAGAN LEGENDS.

The most striking parallels to the story of the miraculous conception of Christ by the virgin, without a human father, are found in pagan legends.¹ Pythagoras was regarded by his disciples as an incarnation of Apollo, and even as his son.² Concerning Plato, the legend was current among the Athenians, during his lifetime even, as appears from the funeral oration delivered by his nephew, Spensippus, that his mother, Periktione, conceived him by the god Apollo before cohabitation with her husband. On this account the Academy celebrated the memory of its founder on the birthday of Apollo. Concerning Alexander the Great, it was believed that he was a son of Zeus, who appeared to his mother, Olympias, in the form of a serpent, before King Philip wedded her. Among the Romans, Scipio Africanus and Augustus were regarded as sons of Apollo. The Pythagorean teacher and worker of miracles, Apollonius of Tyana, was thought by his compatriots to be a son of Zeus. Simon Magus proclaimed himself to be a superhuman being, born of a virgin mother, without a human father.

The common motive in these legends, so frequently found in the Græco-Roman world, is correctly traced by Origen (*Contra Celsum* I, 37) to the belief that a man of greater wisdom and strength than ordinary men must owe his physical being to a superior, divine origin. In an age that had no comprehension of natural laws, and whose fancy had been fed by the various legends of mythology about sons of gods and demigods, the most plausible assumption concern-

¹Compare Usener, *Das Weihnachtsfest*, p. 70, ff.

²Iamblichus, *De vita pythagorica*, chap. 2, mentions the old legend that Pythagoras was conceived of Apolla by Parthenis, the wife of Minesarchos, adding, however, that this is incredible, but that rather the soul of Pythagoras in its previous existence had stood in closest relationship to Apollo, and had been sent by him to mankind. But, according to chap. 19, Pythagoras regarded himself as the incorporation of the god Apollo, who had taken human form in order that men might not be confounded by the sight of divine majesty, and consequently afraid of being taught by him. Cp. John 1, 14, and Barnabas v., 10.

ing extraordinary personal greatness was to ascribe it to miraculous birth and divine conception.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF BUDDHA.

But the most remarkable parallel to the Christian legend is offered by the Buddhistic legend, since in the latter as well as in the former the notion of the incarnation of a preëxistent divine being in the person of the historical founder of the religion is found combined with that of his virgin birth.

The legendary biography of Buddha, *Lalita Vistara*,¹ which was translated into Chinese in the year 65 A. D., and is therefore without doubt of pre-Christian origin, begins with the celestial pre-existence of Buddha, where in the assembly of the gods he instructs them regarding the "law," that is, the eternal truth of salvation, and then announces his intention of descending for the salvation of the world, into the womb of a terrestrial woman in order to be born as a human being. The sons of the gods embrace his feet, weeping, and saying: "Noble man, if thou dost not remain here these abodes will no longer shine." But he leaves to them a successor and formally dedicates him as candidate for the future office of Buddha by taking his own tiara from his head and placing it upon the other's, with the words: "Noble man, thou art the one who will be endowed after me with the intelligence of a Buddha" (Foucaux' translation I, 40, chap. 5).

Thus we see that the standing epithet for the celestial being of Buddha who is assumed to precede the various incarnations is "man" (purusha) or "great man" (mahapurusha), and sometimes "victorious lord" (Cakravartin). Whether there is involved in these expressions an allusion to the god Vishnu we may leave an open question;² what interests us is the relation of this notion to the Apocalyptic Jewish appellation for the preëxistent heavenly Messiah as "son

¹Foucaux, *Le Lalita Vistara*, translated from Sanscrit into French, i, viii. The above quotations are taken from this translation, which is generally recognized as the best.

²Senart, *Essai sur la legende du Buddah*, Chapters 1 and 2.

of man" or "man" (Daniel, vii, 13), (Enoch and Ezra) to the Pauline "second man from heaven," to the Gospel title for the Messiah, "son of man," to the doctrine of the gnostic Ophites of a threefold divinity, consisting of the first man, or father, the second man, or son, and the holy ghost, or mother of all the living (Irenaeus, *adv. hæreses*, I, 30), and finally and most vitally, to the doctrine of the gnostic Elcesaites, which is also the basis of the homilies of Clement, in accordance with which the heavenly spirit of Christ and king of the future world first became man in Adam, then in Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and finally, by a supernatural and virgin birth, in Jesus, but is to be expected in yet other incarnations whenever they shall need to save the darkened world by true prophecy (Hippolytus *Philosophumena*, 9, 10. Epiphanius *Hær.*, 30, 53).

How far there may be a historical connection between that Indian doctrine of the incarnations (avatars) of the "great men" in the illuminated teachers or Buddhas of the various epochs and these Jewish-Christian doctrines of the celestial man, cannot be determined just at present. But the Elcesaitic doctrine of Clement of Alexandria, of the various incarnations of the heavenly spirit in Adam, the patriarchs and Jesus seems to me to bear such a striking resemblance to the Indian doctrine that a direct connection can scarcely be doubted in this case. And this is the more probable from the facts that the Elcesaitic Gnosticism originated with a Syrian or Parthian about the year 100 A. D., and that there existed beyond doubt at that time a close intercourse between eastern Persia and India. How long before this Indian influence had been at work upon western Asia we do not, indeed, know, and must accordingly limit ourselves for the present to the actual parallels between those Buddhistic "great men" and the Jewish-Christian "son of man," without venturing to maintain the existence of a historical interdependence.

Proceeding further with the account of the Lalita Vistara, we are told how Queen Maya asked of her husband, King Shuddhodana of Kapilavastu, permission to abstain for a time from marital intercourse, in order to lead an ascetic life in quiet seclusion. During her fast in the spring, while the constellation Puchya was dominant, it

came to pass that she saw in a dream a white elephant enter her body without harming her. She told the dream to her husband, who questioned the oracles about it. They replied with the prophecy that great joy was in store for them, for the queen would bear a son who should become either a mighty ruler or a perfect saint, a buddha and world-savior. And ten months later, when she had borne her son without spot or blemish, the new-born child straightway declared, with lionlike voice: "I am the sublimest and best thing in the world! This is my last birth; I shall put an end to birth, age, disease and death!" At this moment the earth quaked and a celestial music was heard, a supernatural light filled all the spaces of the universe, driving out darkness. All creatures were filled with supreme joy, were freed from all passion and ignorance. The sufferings of the sick were alleviated, hunger and thirst stilled, the intoxicated became sober, the insane regained their reason, the blind their sight, the deaf their hearing, the cripples their strength; the poor became rich, the captives were released and the sorrows of all creatures, even of those in hell, ceased.

THE HOMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY HOSTS AND OF THE WISE MEN.

Thereupon the hosts of the celestial gods and spirits came and presented to the Buddha-child and his mother their homage and their gifts, precious ointments, garments and adornments. The foremost of the gods appeared in the form of youthful Brahmins and raised a hymn of praise: "Happy is the entire world, for in truth he is born who shall bring salvation, who shall restore the world to happiness. He has appeared who by the splendor of his merits will outshine both sun and moon and dispel all darkness. The blind see, the deaf hear, the lunatics receive again their reason. Natural vices no longer torment men, for in all the world good-will prevails. Gods and men can henceforth approach each other without hostility, for he will be the leader of their pilgrimage." (*Lalita vistara*, I, 78, 88.)

At the same time there lived in the Himalayas a great seer named Asita; he perceived from marvelous signs in the heavens the birth of a prince with a lofty destiny, either as a royal ruler or as a saint and savior. He came to the royal palace in Kapilavastu to see

the new-born child and recognized in him the thirty-two signs of the "great man" (the incarnation of the celestial Buddha).

After he had seen this sign the seer Asita began to weep and to sigh deeply. To the king's question whether perchance he foreboded any danger for the young prince Siddhartha, he replied: "No, I am not weeping on his account, but on my own, for I am old and frail; but this young prince will be clothed with the perfect wisdom of a Buddha, and then he will teach for the salvation and joy of the world and of the gods as well, the law which has virtue for its beginning, middle and end, and portray it in its clearest and most perfect sense. After they have heard it from his mouth creatures, heeding the law of their development, will be entirely freed from birth and age, from disease, trouble, complaint, pain and suffering of every sort; those inflamed with the fire of passion he will cool with the water of the good law; those bound in darkness and those who wander in the evil way he will lead upon the right path of happiness (of Nirvana); those bound in the fetters of natural corruption he will free from such fetters; he will open the eyes of wisdom in the blind whose eyes are clouded by the deep darkness of ignorance; he will lead myriads of beings out of the sea of life that is surging on this side showing the way into immortality. And we! we shall not live to see the work of this precious savior! That is why I weep and sigh, for it is too late for me to receive salvation from sickness and passion" (*Lalita vistara*, I, 91-94).

JESUS AND SIDDHARTHA.

The resemblance of these Buddhistic legends to the evangelical story of the childhood of Jesus, especially according to the gospel of Luke, is self-evident. Moreover, there are several parallels to the account of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple, Luke ii, 41-52. When Prince Siddhartha was taken to school he surprised and shamed his teachers by his superior knowledge of all the 64 writings comprising the learning of the Hindu schools. Once, when he had gone into the country, in order to observe agriculture,¹ he became

¹According to another version it was at the time of the spring festival, when the king used to draw the first furrows with a golden plow; impelled by curiosity to witness this festival, the nurse had left the young prince alone.

absorbed in pious meditation under the shadow of a tree, when five strangers, sages or saints (rishis), coming along that way, recognized by the majestic glory radiating from the future Buddha that he must be a son of God, if not the incarnation of the sun-god himself. In the meantime the prince was missed at home, and no one could answer the king's question as to where he had gone, and they began to search for him everywhere. At last he was found under the tree, whose shadow had not moved the whole day, still absorbed in meditation, surrounded by the holy men, radiant with the light of majesty, like the moon in the midst of the stars. His father was startled by this sight, but the son addressed him with the voice of Brahma, full of dignity: "Leave thy plowing,¹ O father, and look higher!" Thus he rebuked his father's lack of higher thought and aspiration, just as the twelve-year-old Jesus rebuked his mother, Luke ii, 49. Thereupon he returned with his father to the city, and remained there, conforming to the customs of the world, but his mind occupied wholly with the thought of going away in order to become the perfectly pure being (Buddha). (*Lalita vistara*, I, 115, 118, 122.)

BABISM—A RECENT PARALLEL.

How deeply the notion of successive incarnations of the divine spirit in historical personages is rooted in the mind of Asiatic nations was seen even in the nineteenth century in the rise of the religion of Babism in Persia.² Its founder, Mirza Ali Mohammed, had come forward in his youth as the enthusiastic reformer of the official Mohammedan religion and the passionate opponent of the degenerate hierarchy, and he soon had a large number of adherents, who were devoted to him with worshipful zeal, (in the year 1844). The founder claimed unconditional authority, and called himself "the Bab," i. e., the gate, through which alone one could gain the knowledge of God. He believed himself to be the supreme incorporation of the divine breath or word, whose former revelations had

¹This presupposes that the ceremony of the plow at the spring festival was the occasion of the boy's being lost.

²Gobineau: *Les religions et les philosophies de l'Asie centrale*, p. 145 ff.

appeared in Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed. All these divine representatives are in fact only different manifestations of the same divine being, and are all alike in having their immediate origin from God, and, being more closely united with God, return to him more quickly than other men. What distinguishes them from one another is merely the form of their manifestation, conditioned by their time. Just as Jesus was a reproduction of Moses adapted to his time, and Mohammed a reproduction of Jesus, so the Bab is a reproduction of Mohammed. But although he is in his time the supreme manifestation of the divine spirit, he is not the last, but will have successors just as he had predecessors. With this conviction the Bab went to his martyrdom with joyful serenity. He predicted that the spirit of God dwelling within him would immediately after his death pass over to one of his disciples. "The one whom God shall reveal" shall continue the work of the Bab and deliver the world from the injustice now prevailing. And, in fact, after the execution of the Bab at Tebriz (1850) his sect maintained itself under new leaders and has still many adherents. One of its later leaders, Behá (died at Acre, 1892) was regarded by the faithful as the incarnation of the godhead, and was actually called "God" and "King or Creator of Gods." But a protest was made to these preposterous claims by another party, and thus arose occasion for the discussion of the old question: What is the relation of the divine being to his human manifestation?

II.—CHRIST AS THE CONQUEROR OF SATAN.

From the beginning it was the settled conviction of the Christian communion that Christ had come for the purpose of destroying the works of the Devil. This belief found expression in various forms.

1. Before entering upon his career as Messiah, Christ successfully withstood the temptations of Satan. According to the accounts in the gospel of Matthew (iv, 1-11) and of Luke (iv, 1-13) this

¹ Brown, *The new History of the Bab*, 1893, p. 395.

moral battle between Christ and the Devil was fought in three passages, in each of which Christ gained the victory through the weapon of the Word of God. Finally, it is said, Satan left him (according to Luke, for a season at least), and angels came to him and ministered unto him. (Matt. iv, 11; Luke iv, 13; Mark i, 13.)

2. Christ triumphantly proved his superiority to the Devil by casting out evil spirits from the possessed and the sick. (Mark iii, 22 ff.; Matt. xii, 24-29.)

3. In the future, at his second coming to judge the world, Christ will put an end to the power of Satan forever. This final victory over the evil spirit is divided into two scenes in the Revelation of St. John: The King of kings, coming down from heaven, with his armies, smites the nations gathered to make war upon him, with the sharp sword proceeding out of his mouth, whereupon the Devil is bound and thrown into the abyss (of hell), where he remains a thousand years under lock and seal. When the thousand years of the reign of Christ and of the resurrected martyrs are finished, Satan will be loosed from his prison, to lead astray the nations of the earth, especially Gog and Magog, and to gather them together for war upon the saints, but his armies will be destroyed by fire from heaven and Satan himself will be thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented for ever and ever. (Rev. xix, 11-21; xx, 1-10.)

Parallels to the gospel story of the temptation are found in the Buddhistic and Iranian legend. The Buddhistic story of the temptation is told in various versions; the detailed account of the *Lalita Vistara*, chapter 21, may be condensed as follows:

After Prince Siddhartha had left his father's palace, and had spent five years in monkish asceticism, he betook himself to the tree of knowledge, in order that he might by deep meditation attain complete wisdom and the dignity of Buddha. Now when Mara, the lord of the air and of all evil, recognized that his dominion would come to an end through Buddha, he called all the hosts of his evil spirits together to fight against this dangerous opponent. They hurled against him as he sat under the tree of knowledge mountains and flames of fire and weapons of all kinds, but all their

missiles fell at his feet as flowers, or remained hanging as garlands in the tree above him.

Then the hostile demon, full of wrath and envy, spoke to Buddha: "Arise, Prince, and enjoy your kingdom, for by what merit have you gained the redemption (dignity of Buddha)?" Buddha referred to the countless sacrifices which he had made for the benefit of others in his former existences; and he called upon the earth as a witness. Whereupon an earthquake ensued, with fearful rumbling, and the goddess of Earth appeared, and spoke to him: "O great man, it is indeed as thou hast said, thou hast thyself become the supreme witness of the earth, including the gods." Therewith the demons fled as jackals do at the voice of the lion.

Now the wicked adversary called his daughters, and bade them tempt Buddha by the display of all their charms. But he remained unmoved by their allurements and instructed them with serious discourse concerning the perishable and harmful nature of deceitful lusts, so that they withdrew in shame, and acknowledged the invincibility of his virtue, and the sublimity of his perfect wisdom. Then the good spirits drew near to the tree of knowledge, and rejoiced in the victory of Buddha over the evil spirit.

Once more the fiend accosted Buddha with the demand that he give way to him, the lord of the air and of the visible world, since the aim of his striving was, after all, too difficult to be attained. But Buddha answered: "If you are the lord of the air and of the visible world, I am the lord of the law, and in spite of you, I shall gain the supreme knowledge." Thus the holy man resisted the temptations of the adversary; unshaken by threats or by allurements, he steadfastly kept the conviction of his higher vocation, and the resolve to follow it on the road of renunciation and of knowledge. And immediately afterward he attained complete enlightenment, under the tree of knowledge, and became "Buddha."

Iranian legend, too, tells of the temptation of the prophet Zarathustra by the evil spirit Ahriman, who made this proposition to him: "Renounce the good law of the worshipers of Mazda, and thou shalt have such power as was possessed by Zohak, the ruler of nations." But Zarathustra answered: "No, never will I re-

nounce the good law of the worshipers of Mazda, even though my life, body and soul are sundered; the word taught by Mazda is my weapon, my best weapon."

But the Iranian religion looks for the final conquest of the diabolic realm of Ahriman by the future redeemer Soshyans. In him we may see a sort of miraculous return of Zarathustra since he is to be born of a virgin, who is supposed to receive, while bathing in a lake, the seed of Zarathustra there preserved.¹

The Iranian religion expects the future coming of this "victorious savior" to bring about the resurrection and the restoration of the world. This will be preceded by insurrection and warfare in the spirit-world. The wicked dragon Dahak, whom the hero Feridan had once conquered and bound within the mountain Demavend, will break loose from his bonds and spread disaster over the world, but he will be slain by the hero Keresaspa, who will come to life again after long sleep. Then Soshyans will cause the resurrection of all men, and will bestow upon them their reward according to their works. The ungodly will be punished three days and nights in hell, then a general conflagration of the world will destroy all evil. In the last conflict, Ahura and his archangels will overcome Ahriman and his evil spirits, who will then be annihilated in the molten metal resulting from the conflagration of the world. But for the souls that have undergone purification Soshyans will prepare the draught of immortality.

Thus the course of events in the last days is described in chapter 30 of the *Bundehesch*, a theological tract of the time of the Sassanidae.² But even before this, an ancient song in the *Avesta*³ celebrates Soshyans as the conqueror of the hostile demons and the restorer of the world: "Then the King in majesty will walk with Soshyans and his other friends, when the world is formed anew, when he shall release it from age, from death, from decay and

¹Compare Hübschmann: "Parsische Lehr von Yenseits und jüngsten Gericht" in *Jahrbucher für prot. Theol.*, 1879, p. 234. Böcklin: *Die Verwandtschaft der jüdisch-christlichen mit der parsischen Eschatologie*, p. 91 ff.

²*Sacred Books of the East*, V. 120 ff.

³*Sacred Books of the East*.—XXIII, 306.

corruption, so that it shall ever blossom and flourish, when all the dead shall arise, all that live shall become immortal, when the world shall be renewed according to the heart's desire, when that which is pure and good shall become changeless and permanent, when the spirit of lies shall also perish."

In the twelfth chapter of the Revelation of St. John there is handed down to us in a Christian transcription a Jewish legend of the persecution of the child-Messiah by the Devil, and the defeat of the latter by the archangel Michael. This legend has not parallels alone, but its direct source in a pagan myth of the conflict between the gods of light and of darkness. According to the Greek legend,¹ Leto, before the birth of Apollo, her son by Zeus, was persecuted by the earth-dragon, Python, who sought to destroy her expected son, because the oracle had predicted that the child would do him harm. But Boreas, the god of the wind, bore away the persecuted goddess, and brought her to Poseidon, who prepared a refuge for her on the island Ortygia, where the waves of the ocean hid her from the eyes of the pursuer. Here Leto gave birth to Apollo, who was so strong by the fourth day after his birth that he slew Python, the Dragon, upon Parnassus.

This myth, widely diffused in Asia Minor, as attested by coins bearing the image of Leto in flight, was first applied to the (future) Messiah in the Jewish-Hellenic syncretist circles, and accordingly underwent certain changes. To be sure, the chief features remain the same: The persecution of the heavenly child (the Messiah), and of his mother (idealized Israel), by the dragon (the Devil), and their rescue, by transportation on the wings of the wind (the eagle) to a sheltered place in the wilderness (instead of an island), bodies of water playing an important although different part in each version. But the defeat of the hostile dragon is ascribed, not to the Messianic child, which is caught up to God, but to the militant archangel Michael, who, as guardian angel of Israel, to a certain extent represents the Messiah in the world

¹See Hyginus' *Fabulae* (ed. Schmidt, p. 17). Deterich (Abraxas, p. 117 ff.) first called attention to this mythical basis of Rev. 12.

of spirits. But the result of this conflict of angels and demons in heaven is not yet the complete destruction of the dragon, but only his being cast down from heaven to earth, where for a time he continues his fierce hostility to the seed of the woman until his future defeat by the Messiah.

The simple pagan myth of the persecution and rescue of the young sun-god and his speedily ensuing victory over the hostile demon of darkness is the more complicated in the Jewish interpretation, because the complete defeat of the devil's dominion upon earth is not looked for until the coming of the future Messiah, hence cannot be already ascribed to the Messianic child. Therefore this conflict had to be divided into two acts, the first of which is put into the past, as a prologue in heaven, the hero of which is Michael, while the second, the Messiah's final victory, is reserved for the future. Thus the pagan-Jewish myth of the Messiah could be more easily adapted in the Apocalypse to Christ Jesus, since he, too, is not to manifest himself fully as the conqueror of Satan until his second coming (*parusie*) being meanwhile caught up to the throne of God (by his ascension to heaven), and sheltered from all attacks.

This same myth, which is the groundwork of the apocalyptic vision in Rev. xii, comes to light again in the legend of the persecution and flight of the child Christ, as told in the gospel of Matthew. Here the mythical dragon, the Devil of the Apocalypse, is the crafty Jewish King Herod, who seeks the life of the Messianic child, and orders the massacre of the children at Bethlehem. Here, too, the mother flees with her child, not into the wilderness, however, but to Egypt, because the young Messiah was to be called out of the same land from which Israel had once gone forth, that the word of the prophet, Hosea xi, 1, might be fulfilled.

This legend likewise has a number of prototypes in the legends of heroes: in the rescue of the child Moses, by the Egyptian princess (*Exodus ii*), likewise in that of the Assyrian prince, Sargon, who, when his uncle sought his life, was placed in a basket of reeds in the Euphrates and was rescued and reared by a water carrier;¹

¹Smith, *Early History of Babylonia*, 46.

in the Hindu myth of the god-man Krishna (the incarnation of the god, Vishnu), whose life was sought by his uncle, King Kansa, who commanded that all boys of the same age in his dominion should be killed; by Krishna was hidden in the hut of a poor shepherd and brought up by him.¹ In the same way, the young Persian prince, Cyrus, was to be killed, by command of his grandfather, Astyages, but was spared by the shepherd commissioned to do the deed and was brought up by him as his own child.² There is a similar tradition about Augustus:³ that before his birth, the Senate, impelled by an oracle, foretelling the birth of a Roman king, had issued an edict, ordering that all boys born in that year should be killed, but the parents of Augustus did not obey the decree.

All these legends doubtless have their source in nature-myths like the myth of Leto and Apollo, and they all have a common motive which is easily recognized. The value of the conspicuous life of a hero is to be enhanced by the fact that the powers of light and of darkness contend over his existence from the very beginning. The life of the child is to show in the prologue what is to be later the life-task of the hero; the divine principle of life and of light, of goodness and truth, is to gain the victory over the hostile forces of the universe.

III. CHRIST AS THE WONDER-WORKING SAVIOR.

Although Jesus himself spurned the suggestion that he should work startling wonders, and sharply rebuked such a desire as be-tokening of a perverse spirit (Mark viii, 11 ff.; Matthew xvi, 1-4) it was inevitable that faith should adorn the image of Christ with a rich wreath of miraculous stories. This was the natural consequence of belief in his Messiahship, for even according to Jewish expectation, the Messiah was to repeat and surpass the miracles of the holy men of the Old Testament, and of belief in his divine sonship, for it

¹Wheeler, *History of India*. i., 462, ff.

²Herodotus, i, 108 ff.

³Seutonius, *Octavianus*, 94.

seemed a matter of course that the supernatural spirit with which he was filled or by which he was begotten. should reveal itself even during Christ's earthly career, by supernatural powers. The miracles of the Gospels are partly those of knowledge, partly those of power.

1. Miracles of knowledge :

- a. Miraculous insight into the innermost thoughts of men. (John ii, 25.)
- b. Foreknowledge of future events (prophecy of the passion, the resurrection and second coming).
- c. Miraculous knowledge of past occurrences, as well as of those contemporaneous but far distant. (John i, 48; iv, 17; xi, 14.)

2. Miracles of power :

- a. Casting out of demons from those possessed.
- b. Healing of other sick people.
- c. Awakening of the dead.
- d. Miraculous power over matter and the forces of nature (multiplying the loaves, changing water into wine, calming the storm).
- e. Freedom from the limitations of space and matter (sudden disappearance and reappearance, passing through closed doors, walking upon the water, ascension to heaven). John vi, 19 ff.; Luke xxiv, 31, 36, 51; John xx, 19, 26.

Countless parallels to these marvelous stories are to be found in the legends of pagan heroes and Christian saints. It will suffice to mention a few examples.

In the Buddhistic legend the miracles of knowledge play an important part. Buddha knows not only his own previous births and careers in all their details, but he knows those of others that come into contact with him, their merits and their faults in former existences, and often explains conversion to the ranks of his disciples as the result of merit in a previous existence (the Hindu form of predestination). Moreover, he can penetrate the thoughts of all beings, from the very lowest up to great Brahma himself: "What-

ever passes through your mind is revealed to me. Ye may deceive others, but me ye cannot deceive."¹

But when, at the beginning of his active career, his opponents, at the instigation of the devil Mara, challenged him to manifest his superiority to the holy men, revered hitherto, by performing miracles in the presence of the King and the people, he replied: "I do not teach my disciples to go and work miracles before the Brahmins by supernatural power, but this is what I teach them: So live, ye pious men, as to conceal your good works, and to reveal your sins."² Nevertheless, in this very connection, the legend proceeds to relate how Buddha shamed and subdued his stubborn foes, by a succession of the most astonishing miracles.

When the King, listening to a false accusation against his innocent brother, ordered the hands and feet of the latter to be cut off, Buddha heard from afar the prayer of the unfortunate man, and immediately sent his favorite disciple with the commission to heal the maimed sufferer by pronouncing the sacred formulas of the Buddhistic law. Scarcely were these words spoken, when the body of the prince resumed its former shape, and he, being healed by the power of Buddha, at once manifested supernatural powers, and entered the ranks of the master's followers. Further we are told that fire broke out in the house where Buddha was lodging, but it was quenched of its own accord without doing any damage; that Buddha, by stamping on the ground, produced a fearful earthquake that shook all parts of the earth; that the spirits of the air caused a shower of flowers to fall upon him, and heavenly music to resound; that Buddha, while absorbed in deep meditation, lifted himself up in the air, and that while hovering in the bright atmosphere, wondrous flames of all colors radiated from his body. These "transfiguration scenes" are frequently repeated in Buddhistic legend.

In the Occident, the early centuries of the Roman empire were the ages of the most flourishing belief in miracles and soothsaying.

¹R. S. Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism*, 190.

²Bournouf. *Introduction a l'histoire du buddhism*, p. 151 ff.

The old legends of Hercules, Orpheus, Æneas, Romulus, Esculapius and Pythagoras were told by poets and by historians as stories handed down and therefore trustworthy, and were amplified to please the taste of the reader. The historian, Diodorus Siculus,¹ reports, concerning Hercules, that all his life long, as is commonly narrated, he endured great hardships and dangers, in order to acquire immortality by his benefits to humanity and he recounts in detail the marvelous deeds of this hero till he is finally borne away from the funeral pile to Olympus.

Pausanias² tells us that Esculapius, being exposed to death, when an infant, by his grandfather, was found by a shepherd who recognized by the glory radiating from the child that he was divine. The rumor spread immediately that this divine child could heal the sick and revive the dead. At the time of a pestilence Esculapius is supposed to have come to Rome in the form of a serpent, and to have continued his miraculous healing there for centuries. He is reputed to have awakened ten persons from death. But because he awakened Glaucos, son of Minos, Jupiter killed the wonderful physician with a thunderbolt and placed him among the immortals. As the god of healing he continued his works at his shrines, among which those at Epidaurus and at Rome were especially celebrated as resorts for pilgrimages. During the early centuries of the empire he was considered the most "benevolent" god, from whom help was sought in all troubles of body and mind, and his temples were full of votive offerings and the inscriptions of those that believed they had received help from him. He is said to have appeared in person to some that were sick like the Egyptian god of healing, Serapis.

Even among the philosophers of the Platonic and the Stoic, the neo-Pythagorean and the neo-Platonic schools, the popular belief in miracles and revelations found zealous defenders, who found lines of connection between it and their doctrines of divine providence and of mediatory beings (dæmons) and used its authority as a support for their own doctrines. In these circles especially the old legends

¹*Hist.* I., 2; IV., 8-39.

²*Periegesis* II, 26.

of Pythagoras, the founder of the religio-political covenant, were transmitted with fondness and transmuted into an ideal figure of a god-man, a prophet and a miracle-worker. According to the biography of Iamblichus he was not merely the son of Apollo, but his actual bodily incarnation. Aside from his miraculous prophetic knowledge (a knowledge of his previous existences is also ascribed to him, which suggests Buddha), a quantity of the most astounding miracles are told of him, he cured the sick; suppressed a pestilence by magic, stilled the floods of the ocean and of rivers so that his disciples could pass over them unharmed, while the spirit of the floods addressed him by his name in a clear voice that was heard by all. Furthermore, he had been present among his disciples in two distinct places separated by land and sea (at Metapontus in Italy and Tauromenium in Sicily) on one and the same day—an independence of the limitations of space such as frequently occurs in the legends of Buddha.

The neo-Pythagorean school, however, was not satisfied merely with honoring the ideal of the wise and miracle-working god-man in their old founder, but they claimed that it had reappeared in the Pythagorean Apollonius of Tyana (d. about 96 A. D.), whose biography was written about 220 A. D. at the order of the Empress Julia Domna by the rhetor Philostratus.¹ He has a quantity of miracles to tell of his hero both in knowledge and power. He is said to have foretold various future events such as the revolt of Vindex against Nero, the short reign of Galba, Otho and Vitellius, the death of Titus, the sinking of a ship, etc. Being in Ephesus at the time he saw the murder of Domitian as though he had been present; while in the midst of a conversation with friends he suddenly became silent, looked fixedly before him, and then exclaimed, "Down with him, the tyrant!" Thereupon he explained to his surprised friends that Domitian had just been murdered. Soon afterwards the news arrived that this had in fact taken place in the very same hour.

¹Cp. Baur's Treatise "Apollonius and Christ" in three essays on the history of ancient philosophy, ed. Zeller, 1876.

Apollonius also understood all the tongues of men and of animals and could read even the hidden thoughts of people. He freed the city of Ephesus from the demon of the pest, recognizing him in the guise of a beggar and causing him to be stoned, whereupon a great dog was found beneath the stones. At Corinth he unmasked in the bride of one of his disciples a man-eating empusa, or feminine vampire. At Athens he recognized in a young man, who interrupted his discourse with rude laughter, one possessed of an evil spirit, and commanded the demon to leave him with some perceptible sign. Thereupon the demon announced that he would overturn the statue standing in the hall, and forthwith this statue moved and fell down; but the youth was healed from that moment and restored to his right mind. In Rome he met a funeral train which was conducting to the grave the corpse of a young girl accompanied by her mourning lover. He stepped up and bade the bearers stand still, saying that he would dry the tears of the mourners. They thought that he was intending to deliver a consolatory address, but he laid his hands upon the girl and murmured over her some unintelligible words, whereupon she arose, began to speak and returned to the house of her parents. The father attempted to express his gratitude to the savior of his child by a considerable gift of money, but Apollonius refused to accept it, directing that it be devoted to the trousseau of the bride. The biographer remarks, moreover, that we may leave it an open question whether we have here a case of the arousing of one in a trance or of the restoration to life of one actually dead, the same dilemma that presents itself to us in the New Testament accounts of the raising of Jairus' daughter and of the son of the widow of Nain. (Mark v, 41 f.; and Luke vii, 12 ff.)

All these and other similar miracles of Apollonius had a beneficent and philanthropic purpose, serving for the relief of those suffering from all sorts of ills; but some stories are told in which he himself is the person involved in danger, among them the following: When he had been thrown into prison on the order of Domitian and loaded with fetters, a friend asked him when he would probably be freed. He replied: I will give you here a proof of my liberty, shaking off his chains. But then he voluntarily put them on again,

and the disciple recognized his miraculous power. This miracle with its transparent symbolism—the superiority of the saint to all the power of a hostile world—recalls the miraculous release of the apostles Peter and Paul out of prison (Acts xii, 7; xvi, 26) and the falling down of the Roman cohorts in Gethsemane at the word of Jesus (John xvii, 6).

The legends of the miracles of the Christian saints are in the same line with those of the Pythagorean. The apocryphal acts of the apostles are full of the most remarkable miracles which the apostles are said to have performed among the heathen for the confirmation of the truth of their gospel. According to the Acts of Peter,¹ for instance, Peter drove out a demon from a young man in Rome, and as the demon in leaving overturned and broke a statue of one of the emperors, Peter restored it by the magic power of the holy water. Again, he restored to life a salted herring, gave sight to several blind widows, had a babe proclaim in the voice of a man the punishment impending over Simon Magus, while a dog with a human voice challenged the Magian to a contest in miracle-working. The Magian offered to bring back to life a dead man, whom he had himself killed by his magic arts, but he succeeded only partially, as the man died again immediately. Peter, on the other hand, before the eyes of the Roman people and of the prefect of the city, raised three dead men in succession to new and complete life and cured many sick besides. But when Simon Magus thought to outshine all these miracles by his own ascension into Heaven in bodily form, the attempt at flight was frustrated by the prayer of the Apostle, the Magian fell from a great height and was killed.

When on the persuasion of his friends Peter was about to evade martyrdom by flight, Christ met him at the city gate and replied to the question where he was going, "To Rome, to be crucified again." Peter immediately turned about, was condemned to death on the cross and asked from humility to be crucified head downwards. When this was done, the crucified apostle comforted his mourning friends in a mystical address on the mysteries of the cross, while

¹Lipsius, *Apokryphe Apostelgeschichten*, II, 1.

angels with wreaths of roses and lilies stood about him. But after his death he appeared frequently to his followers and admonished them to remain faithful. But he appeared to Emperor Nero also in a vision, gave him a fearful beating and commanded him to leave the Christians in peace thenceforth.

This reappearance of the martyrs after death to comfort their mourning church is very common, one might almost say a standing feature of the legends of the saints, which must certainly rest upon actual psychic experiences, such as visions and hallucinations.

From the great abundance of church legends of miracles we call attention to two instances from early and middle-age history. In the last book of his work *De civitate Dei* (XXII, chap. 8) Augustine raises the question why such miracles no longer occurred as in the accounts of the gospel time. And he makes answer, first, that they are no longer so necessary as in those days when they were intended to convert the world to the faith, whereas anyone who still required a miracle to help him believe was himself a miracle, refusing to believe in spite of the belief of the world. Besides, he goes on, miracles do still occur in the name of Christ, either through his sacraments or through the prayers or the memorials of his saints, only that these current miracles no longer attract such worldwide attention as those earlier ones.

And then he tells a series of stories of miraculous occurrences from his own time and partly from his own immediate environment. In Milan the bones of the martyrs, Protusius and Gervasius, had been found by means of a revelation in a dream to Bishop Ambrosius, and on the occasion of the resulting celebration a blind man had been cured before the eyes of all those present. In Carthage he had been an eye-witness of how his host Innocentius had been suddenly cured through the prayers of himself and his friends of a dangerous ulcer on which an operation was about to be performed. At the same place a pious woman who suffered from cancer of the breast was cured by a newly baptized convert who made the sign of Christ (the cross) on the diseased part. A physician who suffered from the gout was cured of his disease by baptism. A bit of holy earth, which had been taken from the grave of Christ at Jerusalem and

brought to Carthage, expelled the spirits from a haunted house and cured a youth who was lame. In Hippo a maiden was freed from a demon by being anointed with oil which had been consecrated by the tears of the presbyter who was praying for her. In Hippo, too, a miraculous answer was vouchsafed to the prayer of a poor shoemaker addressed to the twenty martyrs for which the place was celebrated; on the shore he found a great fish and in its belly a gold ring; thus the martyrs fulfilled his request for the means to procure clothes. At the celebration of the anniversary of the glorious martyr Stephen, a blind woman was cured by the flowers that had been blessed by the bishop. At the head of the bed of a prominent heathen were laid, while he slept, flowers from the altar of the martyr, and he was moved overnight to the acceptance of the baptism, which before that he had steadfastly refused. A boy who had been run over by an ox-cart and mortally injured was taken to the sanctuary of the martyr and there restored forthwith to his previous complete health. Finally the same martyr caused several restorations from death in this fashion; a garment, consecrated by the relics of the saint, was laid over the corpse, or the body was anointed with oil consecrated in the same way, or it was carried to the holy spot and there laid down while prayers were said over it. "And accordingly," Augustine concludes, "many miracles are still accomplished by the same God, through whom and by what means he will, who performed those of which we read in the Holy Scriptures. Only the former do not become so widely known."

The official biography of St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the order of Minorites or Franciscans (d. 1226) was written by the general of the order, Bonaventura, in 1260. In this version of the legends of the saint he reports a great number of miracles which are said to have been reported by the first disciples and friends of the saint, accordingly by alleged eye-witnesses. St. Francis kissed a leper upon his very wounds and straightway the leprosy disappeared. In the desert he and his comrades were fed with bread from Heaven. He maintained an entire ship's crew upon a long voyage with the miraculously increased supplies from his wallet. Like Moses he caused water to flow from a rock, and like Jesus he

turned pure water into the best of wine. In an assembly of the brotherhood the saint, who was bodily absent, was suddenly seen hovering in the air and blessing the assembly with outstretched arms. The saint was upon an intimate footing with animals; he preached to the birds and they listened to him attentively with outstretched necks; the swallows with their noisy twitter interfered with his address, but on his commanding it they were instantly still; he admonished a wolf to cease from murdering and the beast gave him his paw upon it and became from that moment a tame domestic animal.

The most famous of all is the miracle of the stigmata: During the latter years of his life the saint is said to have borne on hands and feet and side the marks of the wounds of Christ in the form of scars, which bled from time to time, the oldest accounts differing as to the origin and exact nature of the wounds. Later legend spun out this miracle into a series of forty resemblances between Saint Francis and the life of Jesus. Finally, the number of cures from disease, restorations to life, rescues of the shipwrecked and others, which were accomplished by the departed saint, is unlimited. "His memory was so revered that there was a familiar saying regarding him, 'Exaudit quos non ipse audit Deus.' Thus he is more merciful than God himself. This sounds like blasphemy, but it is only the essence of all the worship of the saints frankly expressed."

OTTO PFLEIDERER.

BERLIN, GERMANY.

¹Hase, *Kirchengeschichte*, II, 387.